

Appl. No. 10/801,978
Response dated August 2, 2004
Reply to Office Action of Jun. 3, 2004

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

- 1-38. (canceled)
39. (original) A lift boat comprising:
 - a) a self-propelled hull having a bow, a stern, and port and starboard side panels, a hull periphery, and each side panel having a vertically extending opening;
 - b) a plurality of legs including at least one leg next to the stern and two legs next to the bow including a port leg and a starboard leg, each of the legs being movable relative to the hull between "up" and "down" positions;
 - c) a plurality of pads, one pad attached to each leg;
 - d) each leg having a jacking mechanism that powers a leg upward and downward between "up" and "down" positions;
 - e) a plurality of recesses in the hull for receiving the pads when the lift boat is underway, wherein one of the pads extends laterally beyond the starboard side panel and hull periphery at a vertically extending opening when the boat is underway, and one of the pads extends laterally beyond the port side and hull periphery at one of the vertically extending openings when the boat is underway; and
 - f) wherein each of the port and starboard bow recesses has front openings that communicate with the side openings and a part of the hull extends over a part of each port and starboard pad.
40. (original) The lift boat of claim 39, wherein the lift boat has a deck surface area which is the surface area of the top of the hull as viewed in plan, the pads have a total bottom surface area which is the sum of the bottom surface area of all of the pads, and wherein the total bottom surface area of the pads is at least 30% of the surface area of the deck of the lift boat
41. (original) The lift boat of claim 39, wherein each pad has about the same surface area as every other pad.
42. (original) The lift boat of claim 39, wherein the lift boat has a deck surface area which is the surface area of the top of the hull as viewed in plan, the pads have a total bottom surface area

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which is the sum of the bottom surface area of all of the pads, and wherein the total bottom surface area of the pads is large enough such that the pads exert pressure of less than 7 p.s.i. on the sea floor during use.

43. (original) The lift boat of claim 39, wherein each pad has about the same surface area as every other pad.

44. (original) The lift boat of claim 43, wherein the pads are buoyant in salt water.

45. (original) The lift boat of claim 39 wherein at least some of the pads are positioned at least partially below the waterline when the pads are in a fully up position.

46. (original) The lift boat of claim 39 wherein the pads are buoyant.

47. (original) The lift boat of claim 39 wherein the pads supplement the aggregate buoyancy of the hull when underway.

48-57. (canceled)

58. (original) A lift boat comprising:

a) a self-propelled hull having a bow, a stern, and port and starboard side panels, a hull periphery, a hull centerline, and each side panel having a vertically extending opening;

b) a plurality of legs including at least one stern leg next to the stern and two legs next to the bow including a port leg and a starboard leg, each of the legs being movable relative to the hull between "up" and "down" positions and the stern leg being closer to the hull centerline than the port and starboard legs;

c) a plurality of pads, one pad attached to each leg;

d) each leg having a jacking mechanism that powers a leg upward and downward between "up" and "down" positions;

e) a plurality of recesses in the hull for receiving the pads when the lift boat is underway, wherein one of the pads extends laterally beyond the starboard side panel and hull periphery at a vertically extending opening when the boat is underway, and one of the pads extends laterally beyond the port side and hull periphery at one of the vertically extending openings when the boat is underway; and

f) wherein each of the port and starboard bow recesses has front openings that communicate with the side openings and a part of the hull extends over a part of each port and starboard pad.

59. (original) The lift boat of claim 58, wherein the lift boat has a deck surface area which is the surface area of the top of the hull as viewed in plan, the pads have a total bottom surface area which is the sum of the bottom surface area of all of the pads, and wherein the total bottom surface area of the pads is at least 30% of the surface area of the deck of the lift boat.

60. (original) The lift boat of claim 58, wherein each pad has about the same surface area as every other pad.

61. (original) The lift boat of claim 58, wherein the lift boat has a deck surface area which is the surface area of the top of the hull as viewed in plan, the pads have a total bottom surface area which is the sum of the bottom surface area of all of the pads, and wherein the total bottom surface area of the pads is large enough such that the pads exert pressure of less than 7 p.s.i. on the sea floor during use.

62. (original) The lift boat of claim 58, wherein the pads are buoyant in salt water.

63. (original) The lift boat of claim 58 wherein at least some of the pads are positioned at least partially below the waterline when the pads are in a fully up position.

64. (original) The lift boat of claim 58 wherein the pads are buoyant.

65. (original) The lift boat of claim 58 wherein the pads supplement the aggregate buoyancy of the hull when underway.

66. (canceled)

67. (original) The lift boat of claim 58 further comprising a propeller on the hull for powering the hull.

68. (original) A lift boat comprising:

a) a hull having a deck surface, port and starboard sides, bow and stern portions, a hull periphery, a hull centerline and a hull bottom, each said port and starboard side extending generally between the deck and bottom, the bow portion having a rake portion;

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- b) a plurality of legs movably attached to the hull;
- c) each leg having a jacking mechanism for moving the leg upward and downward relative to the hull; and
- d) a plurality of pads, one pad attached to each leg, including a pair of forward leg pads and an aft pad leg next to the vessel stern portion and closer to the hull centerline than the forward legs;
- e) a plurality of recesses in the hull for receiving the pads when the lift boat is underway, wherein the lift boat has a deck surface area which is the surface area of the top of the hull as viewed in plan, at least two of the pads extending laterally of the deck surface area;
- f) wherein two of the recesses include an opening in one of the sides through which a pad extends beyond the hull periphery during use when the boat is underway and the legs are in the up position; and
- g) a propulsion system for self-propelling the hull, including a pair of propulsion units positioned on opposite sides of the aft leg pad.

69. (canceled)

70. (original) The lift boat of claim 68, wherein the pads are partially recessed into the hull and extend laterally outward from the hull when the boat is underway.

71-85. (canceled)